

The Manufacturing Extension Partnership: Partnering for Manufacturing Innovation and Growth



**MEP • MANUFACTURING
EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP**
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY

The Manufacturing Extension Partnership: Making a Difference for Small Manufacturers

Managing a manufacturing operation today is a challenging proposition. There are constant pressures to cut costs, improve quality, meet environmental and international standards, and get to market faster with new and improved products. But, it's not just the rules of the game that have gotten tougher. In addition, manufacturers are also faced with a larger and more competitive playing field. Today's communications and transportation advancements mean that customers can—and do—buy from companies located anywhere in the world. Customers now have the ability to work with whichever company provides the best product at the best price at the right time. Given these business realities, it's no wonder that more manufacturers are taking advantage of a national network of manufacturing advisors who help level the playing field for America's manufacturers. Through the National Institute of Standards and Technology Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) manufacturers have access to more than 1,550 field staff and manufacturing specialists whose job is to help firms interested in improving their performance. MEP staff, who work at more than 370 manufacturing extension offices in all 50 states and Puerto Rico, help guide firms to greater productivity, increased profits, and enhanced global competitiveness.

What is MEP?

MEP is a nationwide system that helps manufacturers maximize their potential and grow their businesses. Since its inception in 1988, MEP has worked with tens of thousands of manufacturers to generate significant bottom-line efficiencies through the employment of lean manufacturing techniques and other productivity improvement tools. MEP's next generation of services is now helping companies boost top-line growth through a scientifically based process for developing and implementing new ideas.

MEP leverages over \$100 million of federal investment into a nearly \$300 million program by partnering with state and local governments and the private sector to provide a wealth of expertise and resources to manufacturers. Each year, MEP collaborates with tens of thousands of manufacturers to solve problems, increase productivity, improve their economic competitiveness, and enhance their technological capabilities. As a result, MEP clients achieve higher profits, save time and

money, invest in physical and human capital, and create and retain thousands of jobs. MEP is a nationwide system helping manufacturers grow and thrive. MEP centers are located in every state and provide companies with a consistent set of services – focusing on everything from process improvements to strategies for growth – that our accomplished field staff can easily tailor to fit company needs and address local issues.

MEP Centers

MEP centers are non-profit organizations, partnering with the Federal government to offer products and services that meet the specific needs of the region's local manufacturers. Each center works directly with area manufacturers to provide expertise and services tailored to their most critical needs, which range from lean manufacturing and worker training to business practices and implementation of technology innovations. They are staffed by knowledgeable manufacturing and business specialists who have years of practical experience gained from working on the manufacturing floor and/or managing plant operations. MEP center staff also know the local business community and the available local resources.

MEP centers exist as a result of a partnership among the federal government, state/local governments and industry to help local manufacturers. Centers are created through a competitive, merit-based process where funding is contingent upon successful annual reviews of each center. MEP centers are supported by cash contributions from public and private organizations that leverage the federal investment. In addition, center services are fee-based and designed to be flexible and responsive.

Centers provide a range and depth of services based on the needs of client firms. Typically, manufacturers begin their relationship with an MEP center through an assessment of the company's manufacturing and business operations. An in-depth study of the manufacturing and business processes of the company – including plant layout, inventory and materials flow, marketing and sales operations, human resources and information management – is conducted and a plan of action is developed.

The degree and type of assistance provided to each MEP customer is based on the

particular needs of each manufacturer. Services can include management and staff training, policy and procedure development, plant reconfiguration, new product development, Lean Enterprise, ISO, quality improvement, networking, and many others.

The Challenge for Small Manufacturers: Thriving in an Evolving Global Economy

Small manufacturers in the United States are facing significant challenges: they are under constant pressure to cut costs, improve quality, meet environmental and international standards, and get to market faster with new products; all while doing so in a larger, more competitive global marketplace. Additionally, as large manufacturers increase their dependence on suppliers for parts and services, the performance and capabilities of small manufacturers become even more critical to the competitiveness of all manufacturers and to the health of the U.S. economy.

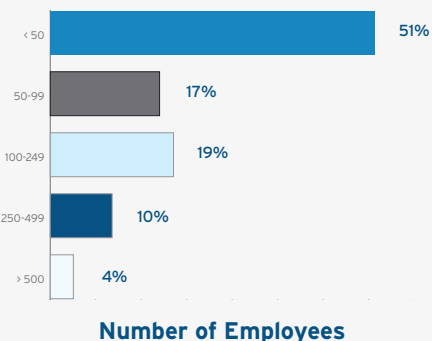
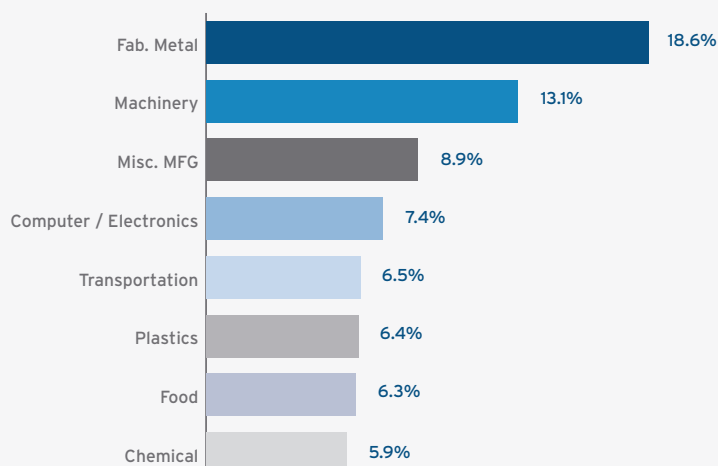
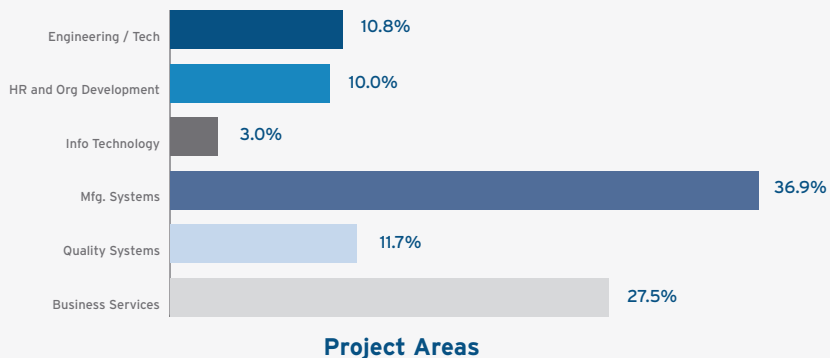
Limited budgets, lack of in-house expertise, and lack of access to the newest technologies are but a few of the significant barriers faced by small manufacturers – barriers that they can overcome by working with MEP. As the catalyst for strengthening American manufacturing, MEP works not only to help manufacturers with problem-solving and survival, but also on developing new sales, new markets, and new products.

How MEP is Making a Difference

32,926

Manufacturers
served in FY2009

MEP has completed over 400,000 customer engagements since the program's inception including technical assistance projects, training programs, networking events and long-term strategic support. These customers are typically manufacturers with fewer than 500 employees in a broad range of industry sectors - from food processors to machine shops to solid state circuitry assemblers. They are companies that need help solving a specific problem, want to implement new technologies, or hope to grow their businesses through the development or improvement of products.



FY 2008* MEP CLIENT IMPACTS AS A DIRECT RESULT OF MEP ACTIVITIES

Increased/Retained Sales		
New Sales	\$3.6 billion	\$9.1 billion
Retained Sales	\$5.5 billion	
Cost Savings		
		\$1.4 billion
New Client Investment		
		\$1.7 billion
Jobs Created		
		13,949
Jobs Retained		
		38,999

* Independent follow-up of clients with projects completed in FY2008. Of the 8,921 clients selected to be surveyed, 7,648 completed the survey in FY2009. Measures are a conservative snapshot of benefits. Recurring or cumulative benefits may be larger.

The NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership is a nationwide system of resources, transforming manufacturers to compete globally, supporting greater supply chain integration, and providing access to technology for improved productivity. MEP is built around manufacturing extension centers locally positioned throughout the U.S. and Puerto Rico addressing the critical and often unique needs of America's manufacturers.



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For a list of centers and additional information about MEP, contact:

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Or visit our website at www.mep.nist.gov

Phone 800-MEP-4MFG for the center serving your area

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